

More High School Students Using ADHD Drugs to Get Better Grades

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A growing number of high school students are using attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) drugs, such as Adderall and Ritalin, to help them get better grades, The New York Times reports. Teens get them from friends, buy them from student dealers, or pretend to have ADHD in order to get prescriptions.

Gary Boggs, a special agent for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), told the newspaper it is a nationwide problem.

Prescription stimulant drugs being abused by teens also include Vyvanse and Focalin. The DEA considers these drugs Class II controlled substances, along with cocaine and morphine, because of their high potential for addiction. Many teenagers do not understand that giving a friend a prescription stimulant pill is legally considered the same as selling it, and can result in a felony prosecution, the article notes.

These medications can calm people with ADHD, but they can provide energy and focus for people without the disorder. Abusing these drugs can lead to mood swings and depression, heart irregularities and extreme exhaustion or even psychosis during withdrawal, according to medical experts. There is little evidence about the long-term effects of young people abusing these stimulants.

According to drug counselors, some teenagers move from abusing stimulants to painkillers and sleeping pills.

Paul L. Hokemeyer, a family therapist at Caron Treatment Centers in Manhattan, told the newspaper, "Children have prefrontal cortexes that are not fully developed, and we're changing the chemistry of the brain. That's what these drugs do. It's one thing if you have a real deficiency — the medicine is really important to those people — but not if your deficiency is not getting into Brown."